

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 EB-11 AID-20

IGA-02 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03 H-03

PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1944

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 10263

EO 11652: GDA

TAGS: MASS ESTC VE CU US

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN SHIPS IN CUBA TRADE

REF: (A) STATE 235702 (B) CARACAS DAO TELEGRAM 281825Z

1. I REGRET THAT MY STAFF DID NOT INFORM ME OF DAO REPORT THAT TWO VENEZUELAN NAVY TRANSPORTS HAD EMBARKED FOR CUBA TO PICK UP 5,000 TONS OF SUGAR. IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH ACTION IN VIEW OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961 MIGHT HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS BEFORE DEPARTURE OF T-19.

2. MY FIRST ACTION HAS BEEN TO INSTRUCT NAVY ATTACHE TO SECURE IMMEDIATE CONFIRMATION OR CORRECTION OF HIS ORIGINAL REPORT. HIS INFORMATION WAS BASED ON TELEPHONE CALL FROM US MILGP NAVY REPRESENTATIVE AT PUERTO CABELLO TO CHIEF OF NAVAL SECTION MILGP ALONG LINES SET OUT CARACAS DAO TELEGRAM 281825Z. NAVAL ATTACHE HAS NOW SECURED DIRECT CONFIRMATION FROM CAPT. HERNANDEZ QUINTANA, N-3 (OPERATIONS) AT VENEZUELAN NAVAL HEADQUARTERS CARACAS THAT IN FACT T-19 HAS DEPARTED FOR CUBA TO LIFT 5,000 TONS OF SUGAR. HOWEVER, CHIEF OF OPERATIONS CATEGORICALLY DENIES TAT T-21 IS TO BE DISPATCHED ON A SIMILAR MISSION. T-19 IS PRESUMABLY CURRENTLY AT SEA.

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3. I PROPOSE TO MAKE AN INFORMAL DEMARCHE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

CALVANI IF HE, AS I HOPE, ACCEPTS MY INVITATION TO BE ON HAND THIS AFTERNOON FOR INVITATIONAL FLIGHT OF C5A. HOWEVER, SUCH A DEMARCHE WILL HAVE TO BE HANDLED WITH KID GLOVES BECAUSE OF CALVANI'S KNOWN SENSITIVITY TO ANY APPEARANCE OF US DIRECTION OVER WHAT VENEZUELA DOES WITH ITS NAVAL VESSELS IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR FORMER US ORIGIN. ANOTHER FACTOR TO BE WEIGHED IN ACCOUNT IS PRESENT ELECTORAL SITUATION AND KNOWN DESIRE OF CALVANI AND PRESIDENT CALDERA TO RECOGNIZE CUBA. A TOO HEAVY HANDED INTERVENTION ON OUR PART AT THIS TIME MIGHT IMPEL CALDERA/CALVANI LITERALLY TO SAY "TO HELL WITH IT" AND GO ON IN DEFIANCE OF PROVISIONS OF OUR FAA OF 1961. THIS MIGHT, THEREFORE, BE SEIZED UPON BY CALDERA AS A LAST MINUTE DRAMATIC MOMENT TO MAKE A DEFIANT STAND AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AND SUPPORT HIS CUBAN POLICY AT THE SAME TIME.

4. HOWEVER, I DO NOT SEE HOW WE CAN ALLEGE THAT ACTION OF VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT IN VIOLATION OF PROVISIONS OF OUR STATUTE COULD BE WAIVED SOLELY ON GROUNDS THAT AUTHORIZATION OF OUR MODEST MAP ASSISTANCE TO VENEZUELA "IS IMPORTANT TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES." WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS VENEZUELAN OIL, AND ON THIS PRAGMATIC GROUND A WAIVER COULD CLEARLY BE JUSTIFIED.

5. THEREFORE, THE LINE I PROPOSE TO TAKE THIS AFTERNOON IF OPPORTUNITY OFFERS IS TO RECALL TO CALVANI THAT SOME MONTHS AGO CHIEF OF MILGP PLAINLY TOLD ADMIRAL SEIJAS, WHO IS VENEZUELAN EQUIVALENT OF OUR CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS, THAT SENDING SHIPS OR AIRCRAFT TO OR FROM CUBA MIGHT INVOLVE VENEZUELA IN THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAA OF 1961 WITH POSSIBILITY OF WIPING OUT OUR ENTIRE MAP TRAINING PROGRAM. I THINK THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT ADM. SEIJAS COMPREHENDED THIS INFORMATION AND IF SO HIS ACTION IN PERMITTING A VENEZUELAN NAVAL VESSEL TO PROCEED TO CUBA TO LOAD SUGAR IS ALL THE MORE INEXPLICABLE -- UNLESS THIS IS PART OF A SOMEWHAT MACHIAVELLIAN CONTRIVANCE BY CALDERA/CALVANI TO DRUM UP A PRETEXT FOR DEFIANCE OF THE US OVER THE CUBA ISSUE. THIS WE MUST EVADE AT ALL COST.

6. I SEE NO ADVANTAGE TO BE GAINED BY ADOPTING SECOND COURSE OF ACTION CONTEMPLATED BY DEPARTMENT; NAMELY, TO PUT WHOLE THING OFF UNTIL AFTER THE VENEZUELAN ELECTIONS. IF COPEYANOS WIN AND WE

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THEN INVOKE OUR STATUTE, WE SHALL START OFF UNDER THE WORST POSSIBLE AUSPICES WITH THE NEW VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT. IF ADECOS WIN AND ACT OF 1961 IS INVOKED AGAINST THEM, THEY WILL BE ALMOST EQUALLY ANGRY. ANY ACTION, TO BE EFFECTIVE, MUST BE TAKEN NOW. I MAY, HOWEVER, HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY WITH CALVANI TO PERSUADE HIM TO POSTPONE LIFTING OF SUGAR UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS. I SHOULD ALSO WISH URGENT INSTRUCTIONS THAT IN EVENT WE SHOULD BE FACED WITH A DECISION ON MANADATORY APPLICATION OF FAA 1961, I

COULD BE AUTHORIZED TO GIVE CALDERA/CALVANI ASSURANCES THAT A
PRESIDENTIAL WAIVER WILL BE FORTHCOMING AND THAT BOTH
GOVERNMENTS WILL SAY NOTHING -- REPEAT NOTHING -- ABOUT THIS
INCIDENT.

7. MY FIRST OBJECTIVE, OF COURSE, WILL BE TO TRY TO TURN F-19
AROUND BEFORE SHE REACHES HAVANA. FAILING THAT SHE MIGHT BE
MAKING A "TRAINING CRUISE" AND RETURN EMPTY. ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE
COULD BE THAT VENEZUELANS IMPORT THEIR SUGAR UNDER SOME OTHER
FLAG.
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